

**Thais Ridgeway
Grade 7
St. Margaret Mary School
First Place**

My Dream

As a United States citizen, it is my intention to continue the dream of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that provided many windows of equal opportunity. I will continue the dream by first becoming a voting citizen at the age of 18 and being actively involved in the community as a leader. King's legacy is marked with "I Have a Dream" and "Promised Land."

Martin Luther King, as a non-violent and conflict resolution advocate, fought for social change and challenged the way people thought and acted. I believe that non-violence and peace is the law for mankind, and it takes obedience to a higher law of love to end violence and domination. Gandhi, about whom King modeled his philosophy, once said "It is nonviolence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love, but are not all great and good things difficult to do? Love of the hater is the most difficult of all. But by the grace of God, even this most difficult action becomes easy to accomplish if we desire to." King faced conflict with dignity and boldness for the sake of righteousness.

Today, people demand respect with violence. Conflict resolution is nonexistent; people have popularity with no dignity, honor, or self-discipline; and the value of life has become meaningless. Love, peace, and unity are words mentioned in the past. I am learning how to prepare myself to stand boldly against injustices with ridicule as the consequences. I will be the best person that I am called to be using myself as a role model in the United States to challenge thoughts and actions to righteousness.

This position of non-violence and peace isn't a popular position or easy task. In my opinion, it was no coincidence that King was a non-violent leader firmly rooted in the Lord. I will be an uncompromising Christian and live a righteous life that commands respect with love.

King gave me the opportunity to receive an education in the United States. I will continue the dream by attending college and becoming a lawyer. I will abide by the law, unafraid to challenge popular beliefs. Human rights are everybody's rights.

My accomplishments and goals, thus far, may not seem important, popular, or even good enough. Hopefully, my contribution to society will sow in the hearts of many what others can reap. Love and peace with non-violence is my dream!